

BOOK REVIEWS



***The Dragon Strikes: China and the Korean War: June-December 1950.* By Patrick C. Roe. Presidio Press, 2000. 466 Pages. \$34.95.** Reviewed by Lieutenant Colonel Michael F. Davino, U.S. Army.

In late November 1950, the United Nations Command launched what became known as the "Home for Christmas" offensive. Despite an earlier clash with Chinese Communist Forces that had left a regiment of the 1st Cavalry Division bloodied in the Eighth U.S. Army zone and a Marine regiment's defeat of a Chinese division in the X Corps zone, the UN Command attempted a massive attack to reunify the Korean peninsula. Within a month, the Eighth Army had been defeated by the Chinese and was withdrawing below the 38th parallel where the war began. In the X Corps zone, the 1st Marine Division had to break out from encirclement and was evacuated by sea to Pusan with the rest of X Corps. In the words of author Patrick Roe, the course of history was changed.

The Dragon Strikes is a close study of the Chinese involvement in the first six months of the Korean War. It is an excellent account and a timely one. Its publication coincides with the 50th anniversary of the war and a time when the potential threat China poses to the United States is under increasing scrutiny.

Patrick Roe, who served as the intelligence officer of a Marine rifle battalion in the Chosin Reservoir campaign, examines in great detail both the Chinese actions against the U.S. X Corps in Northeastern Korea and the defeat of the U.S. Eighth Army at the Chongchon River. He reviews the pre-war situation and analyzes why the Chinese chose to enter the conflict. He covers the deception plan of the Chinese, explaining how they were able to intervene in such a decisive manner while remaining undetected by U.S. intelligence services.

Unlike many authors who tend to hold General of the Army Douglas MacArthur and his G-2, Major General Charles Willoughby, almost solely responsible for the disastrous campaigns in north Korea, Roe describes the role of the Joint Chiefs, the Central Intelligence Agency, and the National Security Council in the debacle. He

explains the complex chain of events that had the national command authorities on the verge of panic, and unable to issue firm orders to MacArthur.

This book will give readers interested in the Korean War an excellent understanding of how the Chinese were able to defeat a technologically superior enemy. It is an excellent addition to the literature available on the so-called "Forgotten War."

***The Greatest War. Americans in Combat, 1941-1945.* By Gerald Astor. Presidio Press, 1999. 1,056 Pages. 34 Photos. \$39.95.** Reviewed by Colonel Christopher B. Timmers, U.S. Army, Retired.

Have you ever encountered a book of fact, of history, that read like fiction? A book with eyewitness accounts whose narrative could almost pass for an outline of a Hollywood action movie? *The Greatest War* will fascinate, enthrall, and amuse you as no other collection of personal recollections can. The accounts of soldiers, sailors, Marines, and airmen are arranged chronologically, extending from Pearl Harbor to the last campaigns in the Pacific and the dropping of the atomic bombs. This book has it all, from a Pearl Harbor survivor who thought the attack was part of an unannounced training exercise, saw an aircraft swoop down to bomb a hangar and initially thought "Boy, is that guy going to get in trouble" to the young infantryman in the 7th Division who was knocked off his feet by an exploding mortar round and moments later found that he could detect no wounds, other than "several feet of pink tubing" lying alongside his leg. And each chapter contains an overview by Astor in which he discusses the conduct of the war up to that particular time and offers insight into the politics, personalities, and strategies of a given theater.

It is easy to recall the enthusiasm Tom Brokaw's book *The Greatest Generation* met when it first hit the store shelves in 1998. At last someone, a celebrity at that, had taken the time to recognize the generation that fought and saved democracy as we know it. Brokaw followed his first book with another, *The Greatest Generation*

Speaks, and it is more in this vein that *The Greatest War* is written. But Astor doesn't dwell on himself or tell us about his family then, as Brokaw does in his first book. His text is devoted solely to the fighting men and women who won the war, their experiences, their laughter, their sorrows. Astor is simply a messenger in the service of a generation that was great indeed.

Unlike Brokaw, Astor is a World War II veteran. In soliciting memories and conducting interviews, he speaks to people who are his contemporaries, and they return the favor with fascinating, and often hilarious, recollections. His book runs to just over 1,000 pages, is more complete, more moving, and better written than Brokaw's. It is a long work, and Astor could have interviewed fewer veterans, covered major campaigns only through their highlights, or relied heavily on other histories. In other words, he could have written a shorter work. We can be thankful that he didn't.

***Proud Legions: A Novel of America's Next War.* By John Antal. Presidio Press, 1999. 398 Pages, Photographs. \$27.50.** Reviewed by Major Dominic J. Caracillo, U.S. Army.

Although *Proud Legions* is a work of fiction, the area of operations in which the combat occurs is real. The routes, terrain, towns, firing ranges, and obstacles conveyed as critical to the proposed war actually exist. Even the units portrayed and the technology existing in those organizations are accurate. Colonel John Antal, a U.S. Army armor brigade commander and an esteemed master of focused, decision-making story telling and strategy assessment, truly captures the essence of modern land combat in *Proud Legions*.

In fact, what Antal does in this book is to propose for us a credible scenario of the way a future war with the North Koreans might play out. It is a threat assessment and a proposed literal war game of sorts. If you have driven the highways south from Panmunjom to the capital city of Seoul, you will be riveted by Antal's narrative.

Entwining the story-telling capabilities of Harold Coyle and Tom Clancy with the

relevant futuristic theories of the likes of George Friedman and John B. Alexander, Antal offers us a technically accurate, plausible premise for the way the next war on the Korean Peninsula might start and consequently unfold. Anyone with even a remote understanding of the situation in the "land of the morning calm" will appreciate Antal's grasp of the precarious condition facing the vulnerable U.S. and Republic of Korea forces in South Korea.

Antal begins *Proud Legions* with a detailed summary of the capabilities of the M1A2 Abrams main battle tank, which sets the stage for the tank warfare about to unfold in the coming chapters. He then masterfully interjects a summary of the North Koreans' intent and objectives; again, all very plausible, given the current state of forces on the Peninsula. Subsequently, he offers us a cast of characters so realistic that anyone on active duty would swear that he has met those people and knows them well. The final chapters portray the full-scale war that the United States and South Korean governments have long expected.

While war against North Korea has been in the offing for the past half century, no one has been able to depict, in the literal sense, the full range of possibilities of how it might start and why and how it might end. This book has met that challenge. While the novel is riveting and immensely entertaining, it is, at the same time, more of a "warning order" to the decision-makers in Korea. Let's hope we can heed the message.

***After the Trenches: The Transformation of U.S. Army Doctrine, 1918-1939.* By William O. Odom. Texas A&M University Press, 1999. 82 Pages. Reviewed by Lieutenant Colonel Albert N. Garland, U.S. Army, Retired.**

If you think the U.S. Army is in less than good shape today, read this book. If he does nothing else, William O. Odom, the author and active Army officer, clearly points out that conditions could be a lot worse.

No one in his right mind, of course, wants to take the Army back to the situation it was in during the 1920s and 1930s. To give you just a little idea of what it was like to serve in that Army, consider the following, which was written by George C. Marshall about a personal experience:

During this period I commanded a post which had for its garrison a battalion of infantry, the basic fighting unit of every army. It was a battalion only in name, for it could muster barely 200 men in ranks when every available man, including cooks, clerks

and kitchen police, [was] present for the little field training that could be accomplished with available funds. The normal strength of a battalion in most armies of the world varies from 800 to 1,000 men.

Odom begins his discussion of the development of doctrine by outlining the major provisions of the National Defense Act of 1920 and its requirements. That act, by the way, gave us the basic military organization we have today: a relatively small but combat-ready Regular Army with a variety of missions. The chief mission was to train the two major civilian components: the National Guard and the Organized Reserves. The Regular Army's other missions were to garrison our overseas possessions and to be ready for immediate employment as required. Part of the latter mission involved manning our coastal defenses.

With this act in hand, the Army's leaders began preparing doctrine to guide the force in the coming years. Odom discusses doctrine in general, why it is necessary, and how it should be developed. He stresses the fact that "most large armies publish a basic capstone manual that describes how the force will fight." Then, they generally prepare supporting manuals that emphasize the major points found in the capstone volume.

In this book, Odom is concerned with how the Army's leaders prepared two capstone doctrinal volumes—Field Service Regulation 1923 (FSR 1923) and FSR 1939. Why FSRs? The Army's first true doctrinal manual, as we know that term today, was published in 1905 as FSR 1905. But since doctrine is ever-changing (too often, perhaps, only to satisfy the whims of an influential flag officer), capstone manuals usually do not last long. FSR 1905 lasted only three years; its successor, FSR 1908, for the same length of time. And so on until FSR 1923 appeared; this one remained as the Army's capstone doctrinal manual for 16 years, until FSR 1939 appeared, although the latter came out in tentative form because of much in-house fighting over its contents.

The thought behind the writing of FSR 1923 constitutes the first half of this book, and the preparation and writing of FSR 1939, the second half. Odom believes FSR 1923 was a superior work while FSR 1939 was not, and dissects each one in detail.

Did the Army, as a whole, feel the effects of these publications? I don't believe either reached far down the chain, probably stopping at the various service schools. Odom does not make this point clear. But I cannot believe that Marshall, with his understrength and underfunded battalion on a post he probably had difficulty maintaining prop-

erly, was overly concerned with implementing either FSR or resulting manuals, since few of the latter were ever published and those that were had limited distribution.

Unfortunately, the Army was in such poor condition during those decades, with 1934 being the low point, that it could do little to implement the FSRs, particularly FSR 1923. The service schools did their best to teach the new doctrine, but even they were limited by a lack of funds. Still, Odom thinks, and I agree, that the service schools were among the few bright spots during those generally dark years. He holds up the Infantry School when Marshall was its assistant commandant as representing "the school system at its best." Unfortunately, while he mentions the School's publication *Infantry in Battle*, a project begun by Marshall but completed after he had gone on to another assignment, he does not mention the *Mailing List* (now *Infantry*), the School's own periodical, which went through several iterations but always tried to give infantrymen in the field useful material.

I believe Odom could also have recognized some of the far-thinking activities of units in the field. The 2d Infantry Division, in the San Antonio area, was conducting actual airborne operations, although on a small scale, as early as 1927. And in Panama, in 1931, a battery of field artillery was moved by air from one side of the zone to the other. Odom does recognize that the War Department did not consider airborne operations of much importance, even after studying such operations being conducted by the Soviets and Germans. Perhaps he was wise to omit our own efforts, particularly since they were probably conducted without War Department approval.

None of this criticism detracts in any way from my good feelings about Odom's efforts. I believe, as he does, that "The Army's experience with doctrine development during the interwar years offers useful insights for today's leaders as they face the challenge of modernizing organization and doctrine in peacetime."

***The Heat of Battle: The 16th Battalion, Durham Light Infantry—The Italian Campaign, 1943-1945.* By Peter Hart. Leo Cooper, 1999. 224 Pages. \$30.00. Reviewed by Lieutenant Colonel Harold E. Raugh, Jr., U.S. Army, Retired.**

The Italian campaign of World War II—from the Salerno landings in September 1943 until its successful conclusion in May 1945—was a long, grim grind through inhospitable, rugged terrain that permitted the

highly skilled German enemy to defend in depth. It was a difficult, challenging infantryman's campaign, requiring small units with good leadership, superb training, effective discipline, and high morale.

One of the many Allied units that fought in Italy was the British Army's 16th Battalion, Durham Light Infantry (DLI). Organized after the 1940 Dunkirk debacle, the 16th DLI deployed to North Africa in January 1943 and experienced its baptism of fire the following month at the Battle of Sedjenane. The 16th DLI, as an element of the British 46th Division, was in the second wave assaulting the Salerno beachhead on 9 September 1943. After footslogging its way up the Italian Peninsula, fighting through the interminable misery of ridges, rivers, rain, and mud, the 16th DLI participated in the breaking of the heavily defended Gothic Line. In December 1944, to fill the vacuum caused by the German withdrawal from Greece, the 16th DLI and other units were airlifted to the vicinity of Athens and soon afterward became embroiled in counterinsurgency operations. The battalion returned to Italy in mid-April 1945, but the war in Europe ended before it could be committed again to battle.

In 1986—40 odd years after the end of World War II—more than 200 former wartime DLI soldiers began recording their combat reminiscences in a collaborative program with the renowned Imperial War Museum. Editor Peter Hart, Oral Historian at the museum, chose "some of the most evocative extracts from those 30 interviews that concerned the 16th Battalion DLI in the Italian Campaign of 1943-1945 and linked them together within a broad historical context." These personal vignettes of combat in Italy highlight the thoughts, fears, trials, and tribulations of officers and enlisted soldiers of all ranks in the battalion, from privates to the battalion commander.

Oral histories, while frequently interesting and thought provoking, need to be read and assessed with a critical eye. The passage of four decades can have a significant effect upon recollections, with memories becoming tainted, embellished, or selective. The author should have provided more "contextual" background information and comprehensive transitions between accounts, and better identified individuals and places mentioned in the various accounts. The book is lavishly illustrated, and five maps supplement the text.

The Heat of Battle describes, through its transcription of oral accounts of combat participants, perceptions of the reality of combat in the somewhat neglected Italian

campaign. It also provides considerable insight into the human element of leadership—including fear, fatigue, and morale—and the dynamics of an Allied infantry battalion at war. This is an interesting and worthwhile book, a fitting tribute to those 16th DLI soldiers who overcame all obstacles in pursuit of victory.

***Unheralded Victory: The Defeat of the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese Army, 1961-1973.* By Mark W. Woodruff. Vandamere Press, 1999. 338 Pages. \$24.95.** Reviewed by Dr. Joe P. Dunn, Converse College.

Unheralded Victory complements a recent spate of books, the best of which are Michael Lind's *Vietnam: The Necessary War* and Lewis Sorley's *A Better War*, which attack the myth that the U.S. military was defeated by the communist forces in Vietnam. The respective authors stress that U.S. forces defeated the enemy in the field; nevertheless, victory was not achieved. The thesis is unquestionably correct, but the real issue that separates scholarly analysis from polemic is the way each author explains the reason for failure.

Mark Woodruff served with the 3d Marine Regiment in Vietnam, and later moved to Australia where he holds a reserve commission as a lieutenant commander and practices as a psychologist with the Royal Australian Navy and the Vietnam Veterans Counseling Service in Perth, Western Australia. Drawing exclusively on printed sources, especially first-person memoir accounts, he briefly traces the U.S. campaign against the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese Army, which he discusses separately. He also incorporates the role of the Australians into the account.

The crisp, tight, interesting narrative serves as a good survey of the military campaigns of the war for the novice reader. And Woodruff makes a spirited case for his thesis. He concludes that for Vietnam veterans "full credit must be given them for their magnificent performance.... In their victory, which to this day remains unheralded, they annihilated forever the Viet Cong and soundly defeated the North Vietnamese Army."

The final third of the book is devoted to what the author considers other myths of the war and the continuing *dich van* campaign of misinformation. Although he makes some interesting and valid points, his own finger-pointing and selective use of evidence and quotations put the book—unlike Lind's and Sorley's—more in the polemical than

the scholarly camp.

Although I found the book useful and quite engaging, the anecdotal development of the thesis is simplistic, and the author is also guilty of his own myth perpetuation. His argument contains elements of truth, but to declare military victory over the communist forces is superficial, naïve, and—to invoke the famous rejoinder made to Harry Summers when he first ventured this interpretation to a North Vietnamese general—"it is also irrelevant." The novice reader will find some valuable statistical and explanatory detail, but one should treat the larger purpose of the book with the same skepticism that Woodruff demands of competing interpretations of the war.

***The Military Memoirs of General John Pope.* Edited by Peter Cozzens and Robert I. Girardi. University of North Carolina Press, 1998. 287 Pages. \$34.95.** Reviewed by Major Don Rightmyer, U.S. Air Force, Retired.

General John Pope may be best known for his unsuccessful command of the Union Army of Virginia that faced Stonewall Jackson and was soundly defeated at the battle of Second Manassas (or Second Bull Run) in August 1862. There was a great deal more of merit and significance to the general's life, but that is the single event for which he has become best known. In 1990, authors Wallace Schultz and Walter Trenerry wrote a biography of Pope (*Abandoned by Lincoln*), in which they described him as the "only commanding general of a major Union army in the Civil war not to have [a biography]." Their work after many years of research was based on a man who had kept no diary, whose surviving letters were scarce, and who had only one extant article that they could locate.

This book, *The Military Memoirs of General John Pope*, is a rare new addition to the military leadership biographies of the Civil War. Pope's personal reminiscences were recently discovered by a well-known contemporary historian of the Western theater of the war, Peter Cozzens, in which General Pope has published his own recollections of service in the Civil War as well as his pre- and postwar days in the U.S. Army. The serialized writings had been published in the late 1800s in the *National Tribune*.

A large part of this book deals with Pope's personal experiences at the battles of Corinth, Island No. Ten, and Cedar Mountain. Of course, one major section of his recollections in the book deals with the battle of Second Bull Run. Despite the rough

treatment and criticism that Pope received after his defeat in Virginia and the harsh treatment given him following the war, his discussion of military campaigns and fellow soldiers is very even-handed. One will not find here the kind of vociferous discussion of others that might have been expected.

It is probably unlikely that additional collections of first-person recall such as this one will be found in published sources such as the *National Tribune*. That is regrettable for many of the Civil War leaders for whom research sources are minimal, but such a finding as Pope's *National Tribune* collection of articles is remarkable in the late 20th century. This book is a very interesting and worthwhile addition to our current published history of the Civil War.

A Great Civil War: A Military and Political History, 1861-1865. By Russell F. Weigley. Indiana University Press, 2000. 624 Pages. Reviewed by Colonel Cole C. Kingseed, U.S. Army.

The U.S. Civil War, 140 years after its beginning, remains the defining event in American history. To military historian Russell Weigley, the conflict defines the national mythology from which Americans draw the understanding of their national character. In what is likely to become the definitive single-volume military and political history of this country's bloodiest conflict, Weigley has produced a superb monograph that rivals James McPherson's epic *Battle Cry of Freedom*.

Weigley views the war as essentially a political conflict characterized by uncontrolled violence. What makes this book indispensable is the author's assessment of the deficiencies in strategic thinking and the inability of either side to develop a war-winning strategy before the war's final stages. Noting how fast the Confederacy collapsed in 1865, Weigley also questions whether the South really represented a true nationalist movement. It is in his willingness to challenge the conventions of history that his book makes its greatest contribution.

The author also provides a provocative analysis of generalship from both Union and Confederate perspectives. Noting Ulysses S. Grant's mastery of the intricacies of maneuver warfare, it is hardly surprising that Weigley views Grant as the most capable general of the war. Grant's protégé William Tecumseh Sherman emerges from these pages as a ruthless commander intent on employing a strategy of abject terror to break the enemy's will to continue the struggle. As for Confederate General James

Longstreet, traditionally the scapegoat of Gettysburg, Weigley states that his reputation for sluggishness is at least partly undeserved.

Weigley also gives high marks to Robert E. Lee, noting that the Confederate chief's penchant for the tactical offensive may have bled the Confederacy white, but Lee was correct in devising a realistic strategy that gave the South its only real chance of winning the war. Lee determined that the decisive theater of the war lay in the Washington-Richmond area and that time was a principal factor working against Southern independence. In this assessment, Weigley takes offense at current historiographical trends, such as Alan Nolan's *Lee Considered*, that fault Lee's strategic ability. As for tactics, Weigley notes that no other military commander since Napoleon has surpassed, or ever would surpass, Lee's exercises in Napoleonic battlefield tactics at Second Manassas and Chancellorsville.

In the political realm, Weigley believes that the presidential election of 1864 had little effect on the prosecution of the war. The Union military victories of Mobile Bay, Atlanta, and Cedar Creek had carried the Confederacy so far toward military collapse by November that the election of McClellan could hardly have prolonged its existence much beyond the new year. Abraham Lincoln was already on record as intending to spare no effort to win the war before the inauguration of a new president. An obvious admirer of Lincoln, Weigley also chastises Jefferson Davis for not ending the war and preventing the further bloodshed once all chances of Confederate victory had vanished under the coordinated onslaught of Union armies.

Was the war worth the carnage? Weigley answers in the affirmative, noting that the war provided the only formula that could end the institution of slavery. Even Lincoln's assassination served to reveal the true nature of the war as stark tragedy. With 620,000 deaths and 1,078,162 casualties, Weigley surmises that one in three members of the war's armed forces was killed or wounded during the course of the war.

In the final analysis, this book is the most comprehensive military and political history of the conflict to date. The Civil War demonstrated the nation's capacity for change, as the Northern vision of nationhood emerged as the American vision. As Lincoln so eloquently expressed it at Gettysburg, the Civil War involved a new birth of freedom as the United States rededicated itself to the attainment of human equality.

RECENT AND RECOMMENDED

The U.S. Army and the Texas Frontier Economy, 1845-1900. By Thomas T. Smith. Texas A&M University Press, 1999. 307 Pages. \$34.95.

Security with Solvency: Dwight D. Eisenhower and the Shaping of the American Military Establishment. By Gerard Clarfield. Praeger, 1999. 288 Pages. \$59.95

Eye in the Sky: The Story of the CORONA Spy Satellites. Smithsonian Institution Press, 1999. 303 Pages. \$17.95, Softbound.

Lee the Soldier. Edited by Gary W. Gallagher. Hardcover published in 1996. University of Nebraska Press, 1999. 692 Pages. \$19.95, Softbound.

Roots of Strategy. Book 4. Edited by Colonel David Jablonsky. Originally published in 1940 by Military Service Publishing Company. Stackpole, 1999. 544 Pages. \$19.95, Softbound.

Thank God and the Infantry: From D-Day to VE-Day with the 1st Battalion, The Royal Norfolk Regiment. By John Lincoln. Originally published in 1994. Sutton Publishing, 1999. 240 Pages. \$22.95, Softbound.

The Vietnam War Almanac. By Harry G. Summers. Originally published in 1985. Presidio, 1999. 432 Pages. \$24.95, Softbound.

A Time Remembered: American Women in the Vietnam War. By Olga Gruzhit-Hoyt. Edited by E.J. McCarthy. Presidio, 1999. 272 Pages. \$27.95, Hardcover.

Gunfire Around the Gulf: The Last Major Naval Campaigns of the Civil War. By Jack Coombe. Bantam, 1999. 288 Pages. \$23.95, Hardcover.

Pegasus Bridge & Merville Battery: British 6th Airborne Division Landings in Normandy D-Day 6th June 1944. Battleground Europe Series. By Carl Shilleto. Combined Publishing, 1999. 208 Pages. \$16.95, Softbound.

Joshua Chamberlain: The Soldier and the Man. By Edward G. Longacre. Combined Publishing (P.O. Box 307, Conshohocken, PA 19428), 1999. 395 Pages. \$29.95, Hardcover.

Cold Beach: Inland from King—June 1944. Battleground Europe Series. By Christopher Dunphie and Garry Johnson. Combined Publishing, 1999. Leo Cooper, Pen Sword Books Ltd. (47 Church St., Barnsley, South Yorkshire S70 2AS), 1999. 160 Pages. \$16.95, Softbound.

Jochen Peiper: Battle Commander, SS Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler. By Charles Whiting. First published in Great Britain by Pen Sword in 1986. Republished in this revised edition by Combined Publishing, 1999. 194 Pages. \$29.95, Hardcover.

Combat Leader's Field Guide. 12th Edition. By MSG Brett A. Stoneberger. Stackpole, 2000. 368 Pages. \$13.95, Softbound.

Blood Brothers: Hiram and Hudson Maxim, Pioneers of Modern Warfare. By Iain McCollum. Chatham Publishing (60 Frith St., London W1V 5TA), 1999. 224 Pages. \$36.96, Hardcover.

The Boston Campaign: April 1775–March 1776. Great Campaigns Series. By Victor Brooks. Combined Publishing, 1999. 253 Pages. \$27.95, Hardcover.

Polygon Wood: Ypres. Battleground Europe Series. By Nigel Cane. Imprint of Pen Sword Books Limited (47 Church Street, Barnsley, South Yorkshire S70 2AS), 1999. 176 Pages. \$16.95, Softbound.